

Film

Authentic vision: Filmmaker Jody Podolsky, formerly of Bloomfield Hills, has drawn on the local community to make her film, "All of It." The film, which premiered last Thursday at the Maple Theatre, will be shown at the upcoming Montreal World Film Festival beginning this week.



dios. The cherished deal, of course, is for a studio to pick up the distribution for "All of It," according to the film's producers. Despite the exorbitant pressure to write, direct and produce "All of It" on a shoestring budget, Podolsky doesn't see filmmaking as much as a risk as a way to probe for universal themes.

"If you are intrigued by the experience of living, then you're grateful to see yourself in so many different colors," she said.

Making it happen

While "All of It" is not autobiographical, Podolsky brings an uncompromising vision and a highly personal tone. Apparently, the intense conflict between the film's mother and daughter serves as a metaphor

for a larger theme.

In her quest to find her own authentic vision, Podolsky has created a parable - what it takes for a young woman to find her own voice.

Like the character in the film, the odyssey of making "All of It" seems to have been as significant as the result.

While the completed film now gives Podolsky a "calling card" when she looks for work at major studios, Gold has found an indelible lesson in nurturing the film over the last year.

"It's been a miracle to make this film," he said. "Through it all, Jody was inspirational. She kept saying, 'We're going to make it happen.'"

"We did it without compromising or settling."

Conversations

her husband, mother, and a day-care person.

"That's not to say that I don't get frustrated and throw up my hands."

Those hands, however, inevitably come back down to earth, and find their way around a smooth-faced toddler, who is now one-year-old, and whose recent utterances included a word especially close to his mother's heart.

"Art" was one of the first things he said," Carroll said proudly.

It's unclear when she says "art" if she's referring to those works by contemporary artists that hang on the gallery walls or her son's yearnings each morning to reach for his mother's arms.

Carroll's bright eyes that once reflected her passionate interest in contemporary art have grown deeper over the past year. Finding a way to balance a career with the relentless maternal demands, she admits, builds character.

"It makes me a better person knowing that I have someone who'll be watching me as an example."

She grits her teeth. Her young son also is a reminder of what she never had.

A seeker

When Carroll was a few years older than the current age of her son, her father was reported missing in action. His plane was shot down. Lost in the jungles of Laos.

In 1969, Carroll said she, her mother and her younger sister became the poster family for MIAs.

The affect of "not knowing" has made her a tireless researcher. She digs for information on up-and-coming artists. She digs for information about child rearing. And she digs for information about the whereabouts of her soldier-father.

She seeks what anyone who has had something precious stolen from them - certainty.

"I can't stand not knowing things," said Carroll. "I couldn't accept not knowing the status of the most important thing in my life."

Two weeks ago, an MIA group held a meeting at the Dearborn Inn. Carroll was informed that the site had been located where her father's plane went down in Laos. The site is expected to be excavated.

But it's uncertain exactly when. Maybe as late as 2003, she was told.

"Look, I told them, 'I had to live with not knowing for years. If it takes until 2003, I can wait.'"

Parenthood not only teaches patience, but also that the only certainty is uncertainty.

And inevitably, that's the most difficult balancing act of all.

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BOOKS

Academics study art of Bugsology

Reading the Rabbit: Explorations in Warner Bros. Animation
Edited by Kevin S. Sandler
Rutgers University Press, \$19
BY HUGH GALLAGHER
STAFF WRITER

"Eh! What's up, Doc?" Bugs, you wouldn't believe what the academics does are saying about you, Daffy and your friends. Apparently, you are one serious rabbit.

Kevin Sandler, a lecturer at the University of Michigan's film and video studies program, has rounded up a collection of essays exploring various aspects of the art and commerce of Warner Bros. animation.

He even contributes an essay questioning exactly what sex you are.

"WHAA! Hey, to quote that nitwit Daffy Duck, 'thathh dethpleable!'"

Indeed! This collection offers a wide ranging look at just how seriously the academic world takes the Warner menagerie.

Originally, Warner Bros. was the "other" cartoon place. Walt Disney was making these meticulously drawn and smoothly animated works of art that awed critics and other animators alike. "Snow White," "Fantasia," "Pinocchio" and other animated features set a standard for animation never equaled.

But some time in the late '40s, critics began to realize what audiences had known years before, Warner Bros. cartoons were funnier, a lot funnier, than Disney's cartoons. Bugs, Daffy, Porky Pig, Tweety and Sylvester, and later, the Roadrunner and Wile E. Coyote were creating anarchic madness that made Mickey Mouse, Goofy and even Donald Duck seem boring and dead-end civilized. And critics began to notice that different directors brought different qualities to the films they directed. Tex Avery, Friz Freleng, Bob Clampett and Chuck Jones became famous while Disney animators slaved in anonymity behind Disney himself.

The Warner Bros. shorts, along with those of the Fleischers, were works of biting satire and condensed artistic vision aimed not at children but at adults.

These essays cover a wide range of topics: the critical shift from Disney to Warner Bros. and how it paralleled a shift to critical acclaim for foreign films, the role of animation in development of animation, the mixed history of racist images in Warner cartoons, the merchandising of Warner and the current "wot wars" with Disney and the fight for the soul of Bugs and his bud-



Eh! Postal: Bugs Bunny postage stamps have been a popular item, proving the lasting popularity of the wascally wabbit.

dies between fans and the "aunts" from the Time-Warner mega corporation, who want to clean up the old cartoons and make them as bland as Uncle Walt's.

These subjects are interesting for anyone who wants to understand the importance of animation as an art. But be forewarned: this book is weighed down by deadly academic language, the kind Chuck Jones loved to lampoon. The authors always seek out \$20 words when \$2 words would work better and actually be more precise.

And some theory just seems to verge on the absurd. For instance, Sandler's discussion of Bugs' penchant for cross-dressing gets tangled with recent posturing about all gender qualities being learned and Bugs' sexuality being undefined. I think Warner always saw him as male. I also think Bugs' drag routine was more related to Milton Berle and other comics who always got a quick laugh by the contrast of their bodies with their, admittedly, exaggerated take on female attributes. The joke was not meant to demean women but to lampoon male attitudes.

Sandler and his academic colleagues seem to miss a lot of the jokes.

The book does stimulate thought on a number of subjects and is well illustrated with black and white scenes from the cartoons.

Sandler will discuss the book and sign copies 7:30 p.m. Tuesday, Aug. 25, at Borders Books & Music, 6996 Orchard Lake Road, Farmington Hills. Th-th-that's All Folks!

10TH YEAR

ANDREW LLOYD WEBBER'S

The PHANTOM of the OPERA

Directed by HAROLD PRINCE



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?

Guess Who's Behind The Mask?

How to Play

To play "Guess who's behind the mask?" Simply guess who the local celebrity Phantoms are and submit your answers on the ballot below for a chance to win a weekend in Toronto & the chance to see the Phantom of the Opera live at The Pantages Theatre in Toronto.

If you need clues to whom the Phantoms might be stay tuned daily to WNIC for on-air clues with Jim Harper and "The Breakfast Club" mornings 5:00 a.m. - 10:00 on 100.3 WNIC, FM.

Grand Prize

Correctly identify the local celebrity Phantoms pictured above and submit them on the entry ballot provided. The correct ballots will be submitted for a random drawing to be held on September 30, 1998.

The Grand Prize will include a pair of choice tickets to a performance of the Phantom of the Opera in Toronto, one night accommodation at The Delta Chelsea Inn, round trip VIA RAIL passes and one Phantom Gift Pack.

How to Enter Contest Rules

If you know "who's behind the mask" complete the entry ballot below and send to: **Observer & Eccentric Newspapers**, C/O: Marketing Department 36251 Schoncraft Rd., Livonia, MI 48150. One ballot per household. Contest is open to residents of Michigan over the age of 18.

No purchase necessary. To obtain an entry ballot and/or full contest rules, please visit the AT&T Centre for the performing Arts, Pantages Theatre Box Office located at 244 Victoria Street in Toronto or mail a self-addressed stamped envelope to Observer Eccentric and Marketing Dept. 36251 Schoncraft Rd., Livonia, MI 48150. Entry Ballots must be received by Observer Eccentric no later than Sunday, September 27, 1998. No substitution for or transfer of the prize will be allowed. The contest is subject to all Federal, Provincial, state and municipal laws.

The contest is open to residents of Michigan over the age of 18. Employees of Livent, Inc., Spring Newspapers, Delta Chelsea Inn and members of their households are not eligible.

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Name: _____
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'Who's Behind the Mask?' Answers:

• _____
• _____
• _____
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Andrew Lloyd Webber's
The PHANTOM of the OPERA
Directed by HAROLD PRINCE